

THE SENIOR COLLEGE MESSENGER

Issue 33: July, 2024

This is an organ for members of Senior College to submit short articles that share news, letters to the editor, reactions to the program and anything that they feel will be of general interest. Its regular appearance will allow for an exchange of opinion of topics of interest to the members. In particular, it would be interesting to record reactions to the talks, colloquium topics, books discussed and items appearing in the Messenger.

Please submit contributions to the co-editors, Ed Barbeau at barbeau@math.utoronto.ca or Mary Finlay at booksaplenty1949@gmail.com.

NEW PRINCIPAL

Our third principal, Michael Hutcheon, completes his term this year. During his term of office, he orchestrated an expansion of Senior College activities, met the challenges of the pandemic and the switch to Zoom events, and saw us through a quintennial Provostial Review that was generally positive. We thank him for his commitment and effective leadership.

*The new Principal is **Patricia Brubaker** who will serve until 2027. Assisting her, **Janet Paterson** will continue her present term as Vice Principal Administrative until next year, and **Susan Pfeiffer** will assume the office of Vice Principal Academic until 2027.*

ANNUAL FEES DUE

The annual fees for Fellows of Senior College are now due. The amount will be billed by the Faculty Club in July, and is payable to the Club. The Senior College portion of the fees is \$78 and the Faculty Club portion is \$180.

ELECTORAL REFORM

I live in the riding of Toronto-St. Paul's and voted in the by-election on June 24. I was surprised to be presented with a huge ballot that listed 84 candidates. As often happens, thereby hangs a tale¹. My first thought was that the government would make quite a bit of money from forfeited deposits. However, in October, 2017, the Court of Queen's Bench in Alberta ruled that imposing a deposit transgressed the Charter. Apparently the surfeit of candidates was part of a protest at the government's inaction on electoral reform. Such reform was urged, in particular, by our late Principal Peter Russell who was active in the organization Ranked Ballot Initiative of Toronto (RaBIT) pushing for a change at the municipal level. One wonders whether the growing public distaste for Mr. Trudeau germinated when

¹William Shakespeare was quite fond of this expression and used it in some of his plays, most notably in implementing a bawdy pun in lines 6-10 of Act 3, Scene 1 of *Othello*.

he decided not to consummate the electoral reform promised in the 2015 election campaign.

This is not the first instance of a bloated list of candidates running for office. When I was studying in England in the 1960s, a similar phenomenon occurred in some by-elections. This was due to a loophole, whereby people wishing a premature exit from military service found that they were discharged by running for public office. Ed Barbeau

CHANGING TIMES

My field of mathematics has evolved over my professional life in different ways that may have analogues in other areas. Apart from steady progress in developing existing technical tools, there have been changes in perspectives, applications, teaching, public communications and interaction with other disciplines..

I would like to invite members of the College to reflect how their own discipline has evolved over the last half century and write for the Messenger a brief essay (about 600 words) on one or more ways this has impacted on their perception of their area, values about what is important, collaboration and teaching.

There are several dimensions that might be relevant:

New perspectives. *For a time, research may proceed within a fixed paradigm based on widely accepted assumptions. Progress results from technical advances. However, sometimes, there may be a complete change of perspective that sends the research along new lines.*

Human factors. *Traditionally, scientific research has been seen as impartial and universal, with rigorous protocols determining the validity of findings. However, as a field becomes more complex, issues of verification become more fraught. For example, in mathematics, it is impossible in many cases to spell out an argument in complete detail and one has to rely on the knowledge and experience of referees. For significant results upon which further work is based, there is a process of steady correction (sometimes by graduate students in pursuit of a thesis topic) that leads to confidence in the community about the reliability of theorems. There is another factor as well in that the value of a proof depends not just on its truthfulness but on the understanding it lends. How much does a finding matter?*

Connections with other disciplines. *Fields that have been pursued in isolation or in small clusters of areas are seen to have connections that extend farther afield. This has often led to collaboration among people with different backgrounds and interest.*

Undergraduate student research. *Some fields have provided opportunities for undergraduates to be part of research teams or take part in meetings of professional societies. Many societies have established committees, sponsored events and founded publications directed to this sector.*

Public outreach. *Many professors in recent years have advised governments and other organizations, written articles and books for public consumption and participated in television interviews and specials. Some have been involved in school education, competitions and programs for school children.*

History. *It seems that there has been a tendency for many scholars to look at the early development of their disciplines, not just out of curiosity, but as a way of gaining a broader perspective and revisiting old questions and ideas. Ed Barbeau*

INTRODUCTION OF NEW FELLOWS

*This month, we extend a warm welcome to **Carol Voaden**, who recently became a Fellow of the College and to **Olga Pugliese**, professor emerita of Italian Studies. I will let them introduce themselves in their own words:*

Carol Voaden: *"I became a member in February, 2022, having learned of Senior College from Peter Alberti, who sits behind me in church.*

"In 1960, I graduated from the Faculty of Medicine at U of T, and after two years of postgraduate training, had an interesting early career practising medicine from coast to coast in Bella Coola and Bella Bella, BC, Carbonear and St. Anthony, NL, and Blanc Sablon, PQ. I was in Bella Coola for two years and the other communities only for summer locums.

"I finally started a family practice in Toronto in 1964, at the time the Faculty of Medicine was becoming interested in teaching medical students about this discipline. I retired in July, 2015.

"Since then, I have developed my interest in theology by becoming an auditor at Wycliffe College, my home church being Yorkminster Park Baptist. My major interest has been the interface between psychology and theology. Viktor Frankl, who survived Auschwitz, wrote an interesting book which in part explores this subject; he called his new therapy logotherapy. I had the privilege of hearing him speak years ago at Massey Hall.

"I really would like to meet anyone at Senior College with whom I might share this interest."

Olga Pugliese; *"My field of specialization has been Renaissance Italian literature and culture. In 1994 I produced, for the Rizzoli publisher in Milan, an Italian translation of Lorenzo Valla's treatise on the donation of Constantine² (now in its 7th edition). My publications also include a study on the dialogue genre as developed by several Renaissance Italian authors, and a monograph on Castiglione's Book of the Courtier, tracing the development of the text through its various redactions, complemented by a transcription of the early manuscripts of the treatise.*

²a forged document whereby the Roman emperor, Constantine, is purported to have transferred authority over the western empire to the pope

“For the past 20 years, I have been working in the field of Italian Canadian studies. A recent book on my family history, tracing four families in the Friuli region³ of Italy is based on solid historical research and consultation of parish archival records. It proposes the incorporation of genealogical research in the teaching of Italian.

“One area of special interest is the contribution, by mainly Italian craftsmen and artists, to the approximately 200 examples of mosaic artwork that have been identified throughout Canada, In addition to the dozen articles and equal number of lectures on the subject, recently on June 23, 2024, I gave a lecture on Italian Creativity and Heritage in Toronto: The ROM (Royal Ontario Museum) Mosaic of 1933 before an audience of 250, in the the museum’s Eaton Theatre. It was sponsored, in partnership with ROM, by the Consulate General of Italy and the Italian Cultural Institute of Toronto, as part of Italian Heritage Month in Ontario.”

CALENDAR OF COMING EVENTS

*Events marked with **F** are for fellows and external fellows. Registration a few days ahead is necessary for each event. This can be done in response to a weekly email from Senior College or the Faculty Club to its members that describes the events or through the Senior College website.*

Book Club: Mondays 2-4 pm (Zoom only) (F)

*July 8: Alex Ross, *The rest is noise: listening to the twentieth century* (2007) (Leaders: Linda Hutcheon, Michael Hutcheon)*

*September 9: Margaret Atwood, *Hag-seed* (2016) (Leader: Linda Hutcheon)*

*October 7: George Monbiot, *Regenesis: feeding the world without devouring the planet* (2022) (Leader: Sara Shettleworth)*

*November 4: Jane Mayer, *Dark money: the hidden history of the billionaires behind the rise of the radical right* (2017)*

*December 2: Martin Puchner, *Culture: the story of us from cave-art to K Pop* (2023) (Leader: Meg Fox)*

*January 6: André Alexis, *Fifteen dogs* (2015) (Leader: Meg Fox)*

*February 3: Kenneth Miller, *The visionary scientists who unlocked the mysteries of sleep* (2023) (Leader: Daphne Maurer)*

*March 3: Timothy Garten Ash, *Homelands: a personal history of Europe* (2023) (Leader: David Milne)*

*April 7: Ursula K. Le Guin, *The dispossessed* (1974) (Leader: Molly Wills)*

³in the north between Venice and Trieste on the Adriatic Sea

May 5: *Emily Wilson, The Odyssey, by Homer in the new poetic translation (2017)*
(Leaders: *Linda Hutcheon & Martin Revermann*)

June 2: *Andrew Stobo Sniderman & Douglas Sanderson (Amo Binashii), The Valley of the Birdtail (2022)* (Leader: *Janet Paterson*)

July 7: *Fei-Fei Li, The worlds I see: curiosity, exploration and discovery at the dawn of AI (2023)* (Leader: *Susan Pfeiffer*)

Aftermath

Those suffering from paraskevidekatriaphobia should be aware that each calendar year has at least one and at most three months for which the 13th falls on a Friday. However, the situation is not as dire as you might suspect and in about three years, some relief is in sight. Surprisingly, going from one calendar year to the next, it is possible to have thirteen months straight none of which has the 13th falling on a Friday. This will happen for the months strictly between August, 2027 and October, 2028, as well as between July, 2029 and September, 2030. (However, the number of months spanning the gap may cause distress to those with triskaidekaphobia.)

You might think that the thirteenth of the month falls on the days of the week with equal frequency. However, this is not the case. You will be familiar with the problem with the Julian calendar, in which every fourth year was a leap year. Unfortunately, since it gave an average year length eleven minutes longer than the solar year, by the time 1582 rolled around the dates for the solstices and equinoxes were 11 days too soon. The immediate fix was to eliminate 11 dates to align with the seasons and to eliminate 3 leap years each 400 years; henceforth, years divisible by 100 but not by 400 would no longer leap.

The day on which January 1 falls advances one weekday after each ordinary year and two weekdays after each leap year. In a 400 year period, it advances $497 = 400 + 97$ days, which is a multiple of 7. Hence, the calendar is the same for each 400-year period. Since the total number of months, 4800, is not divisible by 7, it is not possible for any day of the week to be the 13th one seventh of the time. Over a 400-year period, here are the days of the week with their frequency for the 13th of the month:

Mon 685; Tue 685; Wed 687; Thu 684; Fri 688; Sat 684; Sun 687